

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PEKING 01420 140204Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM USLO PEKING
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INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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S E C R E T PEKING 1420

STADIS/EXDIS////////////////////////////////

WNINTEL

E.O. 11652: GDS-1
TAGS: PINT
SUBJ: RUMOR OF ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AGAINST HUA KUO-FENG

REF: PEKING 2185

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1. SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO A RUMOR FROM A CHINESE
SOURCE AN ATTEMPT WAS MADE ON HUA KUO-FENG'S LIFE
JUNE 10. HUA IS SEEN BY THE SAME SOURCE AS A BENIGN BUT
POWERLESS PUPPET IN HANDS OF MILITARY. END SUMMARY.

2. NORWEGIAN CHARGE HAS PROVIDED US WITH FOLLOWING
COLLECTION OF RUMORS AND POPULAR IMPRESSIONS OF
HUA KUO-FENG BASED ON RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH A
CHINESE FAMILY WITH WHOM HE HAS HAD LONG AND CLOSE
ASSOCIATION PREDATING CULTURAL REVOLUTION. THESE STORIES
MAY BE WELL REMOVED FROM THE TRUTH BUT ARE STILL

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INTERESTING INDICATIONS OF WHAT AVERAGE CHINESE
MAY BELIEVE IS GOING ON WITHIN THEIR LEADERSHIP.

3. AN ATTEMPT TO ASSASSINATE HUA KUO-FENG WAS
MADE ON JUNE 10. HUA WAS IN A MOTORCADE AT THE
TIME, WAS VERY LIGHTLY WOUNDED AND WAS RUSHED TO A
HOSPITAL WHERE HE SPENT THE NEXT FEW DAYS. HUA HAS

WORN A BULLET-PROOF VEST EVER SINCE. (COMMENT: NCNA DID NOT REPORT ANY PUBLIC APPEARANCES BY HUA FROM JUNE 9 WHEN HE MET WITH PHAM VAN DONG UNTIL JUNE 16 WHEN HE MET CONGOLESE PRIME MINISTER GOMA AT THE PEKING AIRPORT. WE HAVE HEARD FROM SEVERAL SOURCES THAT HUA APPEARED TO BE WEARING A BULLET-PROOF VEST WHEN HE RECEIVED ON JULY 3 THE FOREIGN EXPERTS WHO TRANSLATED VOLUME 5 OF MAO'S SELECTED WORKS.)

4. ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT CERTAIN WHO THE ASSAILANT WAS, OR WHAT HIS MOTIVES MIGHT HAVE BEEN, IT IS BELIEVED HE ACTED ALONE AND NOT AS A MEMBER OF A CONSPIRACY.

5. HUA IS PERCEIVED BY MOST CHINESE AS A BENIGN FIGURE, A MODEST MAN WHO DID NOT SEEK THE POSITION HE NOW HOLDS AND ACTUALLY WIELDS VERY LITTLE POWER DESPITE HIS TITLES AND THE ENORMOUS BUILDUP HE HAS RECEIVED IN THE MEDIA. THE PROPAGANDA SURROUNDING HIS FIGURE IS EMBARRASSINGLY OVERBLOWN. FAR FROM BEING AN OMNIPOTENT SUCCESSOR TO MAO, HUA IS ACTUALLY ONLY A FIGUREHEAD, FRONTING FOR THE MILITARY WHILE GOVERNMENT POLICIES ARE BEING DESIGNED BY TENG HSIAO-PING. THE PRC HAS BECOME A MILITARY DICTATORSHIP AND REAL POWER IS IN THE HANDS OF YEH CHIEN-YING AND YEH'S GROUP IN THE PLA.

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6. HUA IS AN ACCIDENTAL OCCUPANT OF HIS PRESENT POSITIONS. HE OWES HIS METEORIC RISE TO CHOU EN-LAI RATHER THAN CHAIRMAN MAO. ON HIS DEATHBED CHOU IN A POLITICAL STROKE OF GENIUM FORESAW THAT ENG WOULD EVENTUALLY LOSE OUT TO THE RADICAL WING OF THE PARTY AND RECOMMENDED HUA TO CHAIRMAN MAO. JUST AS CHOU FORESAW, HUA PROVIDED A NEUTRAL CENTER FOR OTHERS TO RALLY AROUND AND OVERTHROW THE GANG OF FOUR.

7. WE HAVE PUT TIGHT CONTROLS ON THIS MESSAGE BECAUSE LAST USLO REPORT (REFTEL) FROM THIS SOURCE OF COLORFUL RUMORS CONCERNING EVENTS IN OCTOBER 1976 WAS LEAKED TO PRESS IN WASHINGTON CAUSING SOME CHILL IN OUR RELATIONS WITH NORWEGIAN EMBASSY.
DEAN

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